

A Guide to Labor and Support

WHAT IS LABOR?

Labor is progressive uterine contractions resulting in cervical change and the birth of your baby.

WHAT DO CONTRACTIONS FEEL LIKE?

At the beginning, contractions may feel like period cramps. You may feel soreness in your back too. As contractions progress, they may feel like they move in a wave-like fashion. Contractions will likely be 15-20 minutes apart and typically not very painful. As labor progresses contractions will grow in strength and become closer and more intense.

HOW TO TIME CONTRACTIONS.

Contraction apps make timing contractions frequency and duration easy, but if you wish to time on your own, time from the start on one contraction to the start of the next contraction.

WHAT TO DO WHEN CONTRACTIONS START?

If you are greater than 37 weeks, low risk, or have not been advised otherwise, utilize early labor coping methods. Be sure to stay well hydrated and nourished. If it is bedtime, try to go to sleep. If it is daytime, try to go about your day as best you can. Some things you can do at home are:

- Drink plenty of water. Dehydration can cause contractions that do not result in dilation of the cervix.
- Eat nutritious foods to help fuel your body for labor.
- Nap if you are tired or were unable to sleep the night before. The Smart Rest position is a great option to rest in.
- Walk - Take nice large steps to open the pelvis or do curb walking.
- Choose positions that encourage optimal fetal position and fetal engagement. Things to consider: Miles circuit, hands and knees, U.F.O (upright, forward-leaning, open knee) positions, or the doula hula.
- Massage on your low back and feet to help to relieve discomfort.
- Take a shower or bath

- Start to find your rhythm. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Be conscious of tension you may be holding. Release your brow, your jaw, drop your shoulders, release your hands, bottom, and all the way down to your toes.
- Remember: You've got this! Your body was made for this!

WHEN SHOULD I GO TO THE HOSPITAL OR CALL THE BIRTH CENTER?

- Go to the hospital when your contractions are 5 minutes apart, lasting 1 minute long, and you have been in that pattern for 1 hour.
- You have several contractions that are too painful to talk or walk through.
- Your water breaks or you think you are leaking fluid.

OTHER REASONS TO CALL THE BIRTH CENTER.

- You have a headache that won't go away, blurry vision, sudden swelling/weight gain, or sharp abdominal pain.
- You are bleeding enough that blood soaks your underwear or runs down your legs.
- You have felt less movement or kicking from baby.
- You are having thoughts of harming yourself or your baby.
- You are less than 37 weeks, and you are having back pain or cramping, you are leaking fluid from your vagina, or you have not felt the baby move in several hours.
- You have a temperature over 100° F.
- You have vaginal discharge with a bad odor, irritation, or itching.
- You have blood in your urine or burning with urination.



Scan this QR code
for position ideas



IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Marshall Birth Center 530-626-2638

Marshall OBGYN Office 530-344-5470

Marshall Hospital 530-622-1411



MARSHALL

Watch for intensity: when you can't text, write or talk during a contraction, it's a sign that you might be in active labor.

Call if you have bleeding, gushes of fluid, or decreased fetal movement.

EARLY LABOR

Length: 6-12+ hours (could last a day or more)

Contractions: Lasting 30-45 seconds, 5-30 minutes apart

Dilation: 0-6 cm

Emotions: Excited and maybe anxious

- Encourage hydration
- Encourage nutrition
- Encourage rest
- Distract - Watch a movie, play a game, or go for a walk.
- Pay attention to contractions and time when they seem to be getting closer and stronger.

ACTIVE LABOR

Length: 3-5 hours

Contractions: Lasting 45-60 seconds, 3-5 minutes apart

Dilation: 6-8 cm

Emotions: More serious and focused inward

- Create low light and calm environment
- Be supportive of her vocalization during labor. Be aware that high-pitched noises could be a sign she feels out of control. Encourage her to "breathe in through your nose, out through your mouth. Nice and low tones." You can model low "ohhh."
- Guided relaxation - "Release your brow, your jaw, shoulders, your hands, your bottom and your toes."
- Help her to find her rhythm
- Continue to encourage hydration and nourishment
- Offer to massage back, hips, legs, and shoulders
- Counter pressure
- Hip squeeze
- Encourage and support changing positions: hands and knees, birth ball, doula hula, kneeling, sitting on toilet, upright/forward leaning/open knee position, slow dancing, side-lying or walking and more.
- Other coping techniques
 - » Hydrotherapy
 - » Cool washcloth

- Verbal encouragement ideas
 - » "You are doing such a good job."
 - » "You are so strong."
 - » "That one is gone, take your break."
- If she has an epidural, continue to help with position changes and continue to support the birth process. Your emotional support is still just as important as before!

TRANSITION

Length: 30minutes-2 hours

Contractions: Lasting 60-90 seconds, 1-20 minutes apart

Dilation: 8-10 cm

Emotions: Frustrated and needs more support

- Continue support techniques listed before
- Provide emotional, verbal, and physical support
- Use face to face interaction, give brief instructions if she starts to lose her rhythm. Be sure to keep fresh breath throughout labor.

PUSHING

Length: 20 minutes-3 hours or more

Contractions: Lasting 45-60 seconds, 3-5 minutes apart

Dilation: 10 cm

Emotions: Relieved and energized but can grow tired

- Support different pushing positions
- Provide encouragement "You are so strong" "You are almost there" etc.
- Hold a cool cloth or fan her
- Give sips of water or ice chips
- Help support her physically

POSTPARTUM

- Encourage hydration and nutrition
- Encourage rest - there is a wound the size of a salad plate in the uterus that is healing.
- Assist with breastfeeding
- Diaper changes
- Skin to skin with baby
- Advocate for mom and baby



Marshall Birth Center 530-626-2638



MARSHALL